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ABSTRACT

Collaborations are usually developed on a school-to-school basis, and, at present, no vehicle is used for identifying or monitoring them. Little is known about what kinds of collaborations exist, and how many are true "collaborations" (as opposed to "cooperations and "coordinations"). Additionally, very little is known about the structures that need to be in place for collaborations to work and the factors contributing to their success. This study attempts to fill this void by surveying the landscape of existing public/private collaborations, by describing their types, by assessing the degree to which the arrangements are truly collaborative, and by considering factors that contribute to success. Findings indicate that structure influences the success of public/private school partnerships. Collaborations, the most structured type, have more qualities that contribute to a higher degree of mutuality among members. Collaborations have the most successful environments, fewest restrictions to success, and the most positive responses to those restrictions in contrast to cooperations (in all cases) and coordinations (in most cases.) Collaborations are more likely to express the desire to break down barriers and destroy myths about the other partner's environment than the other two partnership types. (DFR)

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Kathleen D. Shinners, Ed.D
AERA Annual Meeting Roundtable Discussioin
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Out of the Trenches: When Public and Private Schools Collaborate

There is anecdotal evidence that throughout the United States, independent schools are working collaboratively with public schools. These partnership efforts have been discovered as a result of questionnaires sent to independent schools, but very little is known about the types of collaborations that exist, who benefits, and the factors that contribute to their success. This paper is based on, and presents a summary of the findings of a study titled "Out of the Trenches: When Public and Private Schools Collaborate (Shinners, '99). The paper relates the findings of the study, including what can be learned from such partnerships, and informs others whom might consider embarking upon collaborations. It also describes collaborations in terms of their goals, organizational structure, support (financial and human), commonalties and differences, as well as how they are assessed.

Collaborations are usually developed on a school-to-school basis, and no vehicle presently is used for identifying or monitoring them. For example, prior to the study we knew little about what kinds of collaborations exist and, of those, how many are true collaborations. We knew little about the structures that need to be in place for collaborations to work and the factors contributing to their success. This paper reports how the study attempted to fill this void by surveying the landscape of existing public/private collaborations and to describe their types, by assessing the degree to which the arrangements are truly collaborative and by considering factors that contribute to their success.

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K. Shinners

Reason for the Study

Why was the study necessary? Many independent schools have seen the value of beginning and sustaining conversations and activities with public schools. They have initiated such efforts on their own, with no central source of information to help guide them. Most of these efforts exist in relative isolation; consequently, there was no central source of information or means of communication available to those who are undertaking such efforts. Knowledge of public/private school collaborations was largely anecdotal (Kane, 1992, p. xiv). The intent of this study was to serve as a common source for those interested in beginning collaborations, and to assist those already involved in such efforts. The results of this study, presented in this paper, may provide a practical usefulness to those interested in learning how other efforts operate. Basic and necessary information regarding how other schools plan, fund, and assess their efforts can be gleaned from this study. Because school collaborations are challenging, those seeking to be involved in collaborations need to learn about problems faced by other collaborators. The study was also intended to serve a practical purpose. Those wishing to contact individual schools taking part in collaborative efforts will find a resource in the Appendix of the study, which lists all known existing collaborations, sorted by school, region, and type of collaboration. By providing such a central directory of public/private school collaborations, existing programs can learn from the collaborative experience of others, generating a synergy among individual efforts.

Description and Significance of Study

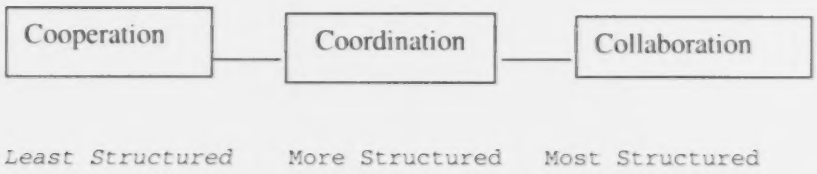
The study was built on work done by The Forum for Public and Private Collaboration, a task force founded by educational leaders in January, 1995. The Forum believed that because public and private institutions have fundamental differences, collaboration among schools could enhance the educational experience in both sectors. It acknowledged that inter-institutional activities could vary in form, from limited to intensive involvement. For example, collaborations can range from inviting a public school to use a private school's theater or athletic field to public and private schools jointly participating in a drug awareness program. Educational research is full of examples that use the word collaboration to mean a plethora of activities. The Forum addressed this by categorizing various collaborations using the framework of Mattessich and Monsey (1992). In their work, three categories of public and private involvement are delineated:

> 1) Cooperation: Activities characterized by informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure or planning effort. Information is shared as needed, and authority is retained by each organization so there is virtually no risk. Resources are separate, as are rewards.
>
> 2) Coordination: Activities characterized by more formal relationships and understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority still rests with the individual organizations, but there is some increased risk to all participants. Resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.
>
> 3) Collaboration: Activities which reflect a more durable and pervasive relationship. Collaborations bring previously separated organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well defined communications channels operating on many levels. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure. Risk is much greater because each member of the collaboration contributes its own

> resources and reputation. Resources are pooled or jointly secured, and the products are shared. (p. 39)

The definition provided by Mattessich and Monsey became the basis of the conceptual framework for the study, and provided the inspiration to build a schema on which to place existing partnership efforts, from the least formal and structured, to the most formal types. The schema is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Public/Private School Cooperations Placed in a Schema of Partnership Efforts.



The findings of the study of existing public and private school collaborative efforts may better prepare both communities for working together. The significance of this study was underscored by the lack of any previous attempt to describe, classify, and analyze existing collaborations.

As the discourse on education reform enters the twenty-first century, the benefits of privatization are currently under discussion. Supporters of this movement argue that if privatization efforts are successful, the public schools will become more competitive. This changes the economic climate of independent schools. Given the possibility of rising tuition and more competition, independent schools may need to form programs that display their strengths, such as character development, to a wider audience. The Forum thinks that independent schools engaging in public/private school collaboration can find

a stronger voice in a wider setting that will eventually strengthen their institutions. The question is, do existing collaborations strengthen their schools as predicted? To ascertain whether this is a valid assumption, more needed to be known about existing collaborations. The study was organized around the following four major research questions, which when answered, would provide the desired knowledge:

Research Question 1: What kinds of Collaborations Exist?
Research Question 2: What factors Contribute to their Success?
Research Question 3: Do they measure their Outcomes?
Research Question 4: Why do Schools Collaborate; What are the Stated Reasons?

It is true that analyzing public/private school joint ventures is one of the few ways possible to better understand what takes place when public and private school populations combine purposes and resources. The main purpose of this study, however, was to assess factors that contribute to the preservation and success of existing collaborations. This is significant because it is necessary to assess the usefulness in existing arrangements, and to isolate the factors that must be in place for arrangements to succeed. The study was done to provide a needed resource in encouraging and supporting the development of more such efforts, if indeed they prove to be advantageous.

Literature Review

As this was a new study, it was grounded in data from previous efforts and the results were based on an analysis of practice because of the lack of published theory on the topic. Where theoretical models of related theory applied, they were considered in the design of the study. Because no information was available on the specific topic of public/private school efforts, literature written about university-school partnerships and

corporate-school partnerships was used as a basis for developing a model upon which to base this study.

Existing research on collaboration theory informed the study of the importance of the relationship between altruism and self-interest is essential in attempting to understand collaborative behavior (Axlerod, 1984). Because, at base, self-interest influences human behavior, it certainly influences the outcome of collaboration, and not necessarily in a negative way. In fact, some who study university-school collaborations think that self-interest is necessary for a symbiotic partnership (Goodlad, 1988, p.13). Schlechty and Whitford, (1988) suggest that people in partnerships would operate like pilot fish, "moving from one shark to the other, depending on convenience, chance and timing," if it were not for the consistent opportunity for self-interest to be met by partners (pp. 191-192). Research indicates that focusing on self-interest may be present difficulties for those in partnerships to reach the "organic" or transformational stage, where "problems are mutually owned," as they are in a collaborative sense (according to the definition in this study) (Slater, 1996; Schlechtly & Whitford, 1988, p. 192).

Most writers cited in this study on partnerships agree, however, that partnerships are held together over time by a structure that reliably operates in the interest of both partners. The study organized partnership efforts by placing them on a scale ranging from cooperation (least organized to collaboration (most organized), as illustrated in Figure 1 in this paper. Recalling some cautionary words of Schlechty and Whitford (1988) however, it would be incorrect to assume that the potential for movement from least to most structured is assured, since difficulties with overcoming self-interest and arriving at mutuality among partners present real challenges.

Governance and Structure it seems can influence the durable of Collaborations— They appear to result from a natural process (Goodlad, 1993, pp. 24-40). The organizers of the Louis Armstrong Middle School (LAMS) and Queens College learned that effective leadership is essential in partnership life. Partnerships need leadership and commitment of resources from the very top of their partnering institutions (Goodlad, 1993, pp. 29-40; Grobe, 1993; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). They also depend on a balanced relationship between leadership and power. The influence of a few charismatic leaders will not work in a partnership. While leadership from the top is necessary, power must be shared and spread because it is not a "finite concept" (Goodlad, 1993, pp. 29-40). The decisions made by leaders of partnering institutions reverberate inside and outside of the institution to the partnership (Goodlad, 1988, p. 28). In summary, when partners take the long view, remain flexible with planning, and share power with supportive leadership, the chances of the resulting structure being customized to fit the needs of the members are higher and the chances of its success are greater (Goodlad, 1993, pp. 25-39; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997).

Method of Study

Data Collection

This was a descriptive study of public-private school collaborations throughout the nation. It was based on the work of a group called the Forum for Public and Private Collaboration located at Teachers College, Columbia University. Members of the Forum, who are leaders in state and regional independent school associations, were recruited to promote and disseminate a survey to all of the member schools (approximately 2000) to collect preliminary information about existing collaborative

efforts. While it is impossible to verify how many schools received the survey, 200 independent schools indicated they were participating in public/private school partnerships. Having identified schools actively engaged in such partnerships, a follow-up survey was necessary to provide additional information regarding the range and patterns of identified efforts, and this was sent to 30 schools. This study used the results of both surveys to gauge the level and nature of public/private school collaboration in the United States. Approximately 200 responses were received to the survey request. The responses provided a database on collaborative efforts that were sorted (largely by category of participants) and then analyzed by the nature of the effort. The information also provided a means for developing an interview protocol for a subsequent, more in-depth survey. The information requested focused on program size, resources, objectives, outcomes, duration, benefits, elements contributing to success, and evaluation methods. A random sample of 30 schools or 15% of the original 200 participating schools responded to the subsequent investigation.

Method for Data Analysis

Armed with the specific definition of collaboration and criteria extracted from the analysis of research on existing university-school and corporate partnerships, the initial research task was to read the data provided by the surveys. Breaking the definition down by key words provided a concrete way to assess whether or not a particular effort related to the intrinsic characteristics of the definition. Partnerships that were categorized based on the initial reading of the survey responses were tested against the criteria (keywords) of their definition categories. Table 1 shows the keywords extracted from the Cooperation definition.

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Table 1: Cooperation Characteristics and their Keywords

Cooperation Descriptive Element	Code
1. No Common Mission	nc
2. No Structure	ns
3. No Planning	np
4. No Risk	nr
5. Shared Information Needs Based	sin
6. Authority Held by Parent Organization	ap
7. Resources Separate	rs
8. Separate Rewards	s

Table 2 shows the keywords extracted from the Coordination definition.

Coordination Definitive Element	**Code**
1. Compatible mission	cam
2. Planning	pl
3. Division of Roles	dr
4. Increased Risk to All	ir
5. Authority Still Held by Parent Organization	ap
6. Resources Available	ra
7. Mutual Rewards	mr
8. Communication Channels	cc

Table 3 shows the keywords extracted from the Collaboration definition.

Table 3: Collaboration Characteristics and their Keywords

Collaboration Descriptive Element	**Code**
1. New Structure	nst
2. Common Mission	ncm
3. Comprehensive Planning	cp
4. Clear Communication Channels (Multi-level)	ccc
5. Greater Risk	gr
6. Pooled Resources	pr
7. Shared Rewards	shr

Results were also tabulated to demonstrate how frequently partnerships shared characteristics of other definition categories.

Limitations of Study

The study examined Public/Private School Partnerships from the perspective of the initiating schools, which were the independent schools. The study was limited to those schools that responded to the survey, although many more public/private school partnerships are known to exist. It is also possible that since the survey was conducted, certain efforts have not endured while others have just begun. The study was also limited to independent schools that were member schools of the National Association of Independent Schools, and members of affiliated regional associations. Another study may extend to other types of private schools, such as parochial schools, using this one as a research model.

Summary of Findings

. This paper presents three main findings as a result of the study:

1. Public /private school partnerships can be grouped by structural characteristics, ranging from the least structured with the least formal communication channels, to the most structured organizations.

2. The most structured type of partnership contains the highest degree of mutuality (mutual risk, mutual reward, common mission and vision).

3. The higher the degree of mutuality, the more successful is the partnership. Successful public/private school partnerships were identified in this study based on the characteristics they demonstrated that contributed to their endurance. Success was not tied to partnership outcomes as very few partnerships had assessment methods in place.

Public/Private School Partnerships Defined.

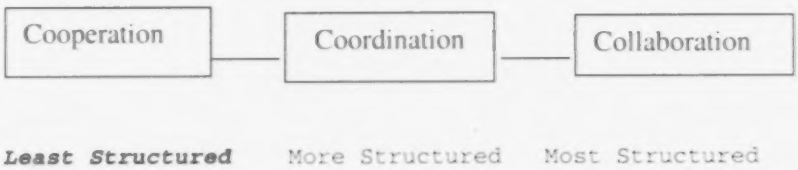
Question Number One: What are Public/Private School Partnerships?

The findings indicate that the partnerships existed in a wide range of organizational structures. Some were very loose, some were more formal and some were quite structured. Partnerships were grouped by the characteristics that identify them as belonging to one of the three types of structures: (1) Cooperation (least formal, (2) Coordination (more formal), or (3) Collaboration (most formal).

Cooperation

The first type of partnership to be analyzed, the Cooperation, is highlighted in Figure 12, on the left.

Figure 2: Public/Private School Cooperations Placed in a Schema of Partnership Efforts.



Cooperations are the least structured of the inter-school programs studied. They commonly met when it was convenient, had no ongoing program or expectations, did not share resources or rewards, (which each partner may experience separately), and were not likely to have common needs. The quality of mutuality was lowest in this category of partnership, and it had the least degree of interdependency.

Nine out of the thirty partnerships (approximately 30%) surveyed were found to be Cooperations. Within these partnerships was a range of activities, including a public/private substance abuse program, professional development meetings, and private school faculty teaching a foreign language and mathematics to public school students,

and a theater production. Patterns among them regarding activities were not evident, although they did share traits such as not sharing resources and not having the same goals. Partners in a cooperation benefited individually, rather than for the partnership, thereby having the highest level of self-interest of the three types of partnerships.

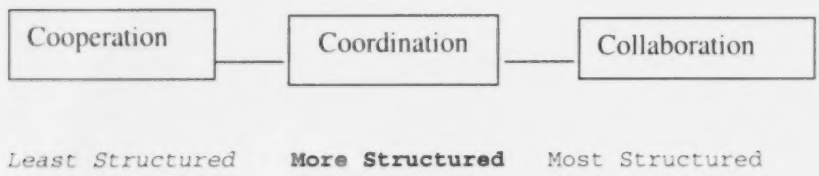
Traits of Cooperations

Most Cooperations communicated when it was convenient and shared information on a need-to-know basis. One of the professional development programs met only once a year, with no evidence of continued communication. The same could be said of a drug prevention program, which was held annually. Cooperations maintained their autonomy. The private school that hosted a theater production let public school students attend the production and use their grounds only; there was no continued communication between the schools. Two professional development Cooperations did not pursue on-going communication around information provided. In one Cooperation, the activities were mixed but the organizations were completely separate. Information was not regularly exchanged. Cooperations showed little agreement on common goals. The private school that sent its staff to the public school to teach a foreign language was primarily meeting the needs of the private school. The private school language program ended at year six, and if it did not teach at the middle school, its students would not have language taught until high school. The public school did not share that goal, since those students had not had foreign language instruction nor were they concerned with language program continuance

Coordinations.

Public/Private School Coordinations were more structured than Cooperations, as can be seen in Figure 3, which places them on the partnership schema.

Figure 3: Public/Private School Coordinations Placed in a Schema of Partnership Efforts.



Coordinations are more committed to the partnerships as a separate entity than Cooperations in that they tended undertake activities with clear and compatible intentions. They were more prone to have structure and to rely on planning than were Cooperations. All parties brought resources (time, money, transportation, facilities, etc.) to the program, increasing the amount of risk to the partners. Partners in a Coordination sought mutual gain and communicated through regular channels to support the partnership. As a result, the degree of mutuality was higher in a public/private school Coordination than in a Cooperation. Partners in a Coordination still did look to their own institutions, however, for direction as they retained authority over the members. In this regard, they were not free to commit to the common enterprise as they would if they were a new structure with the autonomy to make independent decisions. For this reason, they are seen as having a moderate amount of mutuality. Fifteen of the 30 (50%) Partnerships were Coordinations, making it the most common category of those surveyed. As a group,

they had more of the elements of their definition category than Cooperations, but fewer than the Collaboration partnerships

Traits of Coordinations

As with Cooperations, in almost all cases, partnering institutions of Coordinations maintained authority over the partnership, retaining decision-making power.

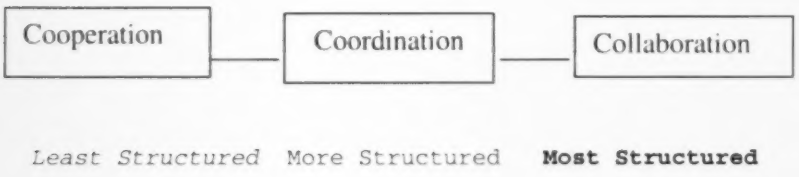
Coordinations were different from Cooperations in that they generated mutual rewards for partners. The most common benefit experienced by the schools was what their students learned from each other and had the advantage of being exposed to children unlike themselves in some or many ways. One private school sent their students to read to, play with, and create projects for severely handicapped children. The children from both schools benefited from this interaction, as they developed new skills and the confidence that flowed from them. Another private school saw the chance to overcome its "gold-plated" image of elitism and broaden its perspective. The public school students involved in the Coordination also interacted with students they would not normally see. The program organizers said such activity really did benefit the students. Another private school said the mutual reward to both schools was how both sets of students came to regard each other. Adults in such programs, usually staff, gained similarly. One private school that offered pedagogy workshops to public and private school staff spoke of how much both groups learned from each other. Resource-sharing programs did exist, such as the use of lawns and theaters, but the mutual rewards from Coordinations were largely a by-product of the individual interaction within the public/private sectors. Coordinations also tended to agree to the goals of the program, but not necessarily to common goals,

they were willing to take more risks to attain those goals, and contribute more resources to the effort than Cooperations.

Collaborations.

Public/private school collaborations ate the most structured of the inter-school programs. Figure 4 places them on the partnership schema.

Figure 4: Public/Private School Collaborations Placed in a Schema of Partnership Efforts.



They appeared to be new structures that emerged when the highest level of mutuality was achieved among public and private schools in a partnership. These Collaborations, working toward a common mission and taking higher levels of risk, achieved a higher level of success in their partnership than the other types of partnerships included in this study. A greater inclination to pool resources, and attempts to arrive at common understanding though increased discourse, while striving to break down stereotypical thinking, provided for more equity in the partnership. By pooling resources, mutual rewards enjoyed by partners reinforced a sense of partnership balance.

Increased autonomy bestowed on the Collaborations enabled them to make decisions that would control the life of the partnership, such as creating new roles for members. While only six of the 30 partnerships surveyed (20%) were found to meet the

definition criteria of Collaboration, making this the smallest category of partnership, as a group they had the most elements of their definition category.

Traits of Collaborations

Collaborations tended to create new organizations. One Collaboration was a consortium, consisting of 16 school districts that served more than 750 public and private school teachers. The consortium was an actual center offering workshops in professional development, concentrating on areas of curriculum content and instructional practice. It expected a similar level of commitment from each partner school and participants were eligible to receive grants for special teacher projects, and funds to support conference attendance. In addition, partners were able to use the resources of the center such as its library and equipment. Another Collaboration was a consortium of 10 schools that shared resources for the purposes of connecting their students, allowing them to share their classroom experiences, and enabling staff to share ideas. Partners planning activities expected that they would expand and become more central to the lives of the schools; they hoped to hire a half-time coordinator (creating a new role). A third Collaboration was a council of public and private schools whose purpose was to educate parents, teachers, doctors and others on media violence using research on the topic. The Collaboration, an independent organization, included public schools, hospitals, a cable television company, and a university.

Those in Collaborations demonstrated an ability to work toward a common Mission. A school Collaboration organized around a Shakespeare project included public and private schools, as well as a library dedicated to the life of William Shakespeare. Students were committed to the teaching and learning of Shakespeare's work. The

partners in a multicultural alliance public/private school collaboration were dedicated to the common goal of attracting minority candidates into the teaching profession. Toward that end 40, schools sponsored 38 interns from regional universities to work in public and private schools. In the Community Media Task Force, a Collaboration of public and private schools and members of the wider community shared the goal of raising awareness of media and their effect on children. It acted on the need for more information on media violence and a common need to know more about the subject. Regarding other partnership traits, collaborations also tended to engage in more comprehensive planning, to develop clearer communications channels, to accept greater risk, and to experience greater mutual rewards than the less structured efforts.

Summary of Findings

In this study, it was found that structure influenced the success of public/private school partnerships. Collaborations, the most structured type, had more qualities that contributed to a higher degree of mutuality among members. Collaborations had the most successful environments, fewer restrictions to success, and the most positive responses to those restrictions than Cooperations (in all cases) and Coordinations (in most cases). Collaborations and Coordinations experienced a similar amount of restrictions to their success. The most important characteristic contributing to a successful partnership environment was found to be effective leadership at the top. The most commonly recognized restriction to creating a successful partnership environment was found to be the tension caused by the differences in cultural norms. The most common characteristic effective in offsetting tension created by these differences was the desire to break down pre-existing stereotypes among those coming from diverse backgrounds. Finally,

Collaborations were more likely to express the desire to break down barriers and destroy myths about the other partner's environment than the other two partnership types.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This exploratory study set out to discover, describe, and analyze existing public school partnerships among private schools. Partnerships needed to be identified. Existing independent school associations provided a feasible source for data collection. Public schools were not included in this database, however, and all partnerships were viewed through the lens of the independent school. With these data in hand, public schools can be included in a further study. Using a survey instrument based on this model, which is informed by subsequent case studies of the public/private school partnerships identified here, a broader study can be conducted on public and private schools and their partners.

Implications and Contributions of Study

What has been learned from analyzing public/private school partnerships? This study stressed the importance of seeking to establish mutuality in school partnerships. Mutuality speaks to paying attention to balancing the partners' needs and accepting partner differences. Mutuality was found to be fundamental to the endurance of the effort, giving partnerships a chance to succeed. In this study, public/private school partnerships were described institutionally, and those that demonstrated the qualities necessary to endure were seen as successful.

This study provided a basis for identifying goals beyond endurance and, subsequently, can provide a basis for measuring goals such as student outcomes or improving teacher practice (as a result of professional development programs).

The larger benefit of the study is that it creates the basis for understanding and evaluating partnerships. Few of the partnerships performed regular assessments and a broader study based on the typology created by this study can provide a useful model for self-assessment of organizational commitment.

This study can further inform researchers who are interested in analyzing public and private school partnerships. One example is the study of public and independent school partnerships currently being undertaken by the University of Leeds. At present, the British researchers have no pre-existing model of public/private school partnership study to build upon and are relying on case studies to inform them of how a new government program should proceed.

This study can provide those considering the initiation of a partnership, as well as those engaged in an existing one, with essential information that can contribute to the quality of the partnership. They need to know, for example, that there are levels of partnership structure, and that each type of structure can be defined by specific criteria. They ought to be aware that the type of structure they create will influence the level of the partnership success. Others starting partnerships, or those in existing ones, should realize that success in a partnership depends on a positive environment in which the partnership can flourish and partnership needs can be met. They should be aware of the factors creating resistance to successful partnerships that were identified in this study. This study can also inform interested parties what strategies have been found to work best against the resistance at hand, at least in the case of these public/private school partnerships.

Finally, the study demonstrates to those considering partnerships the value of crossing boundaries, of traveling to a new environment, and the operating in a different context. This study can be useful to those starting and working in charter schools to anticipate the type of environment that new efforts need in order for them to thrive, since cultural differences are likely to emerge once educators, students, and community members cross boundaries while creating new educational settings. Just as public and private schools have much to learn from sustained joint conversations, so do other types of institutions. Universities, hospitals, corporations, and non-profits are all examples of institutions that may wish to begin a dialogue, before forming partnerships with other institutions in or out of their sector. Those crossing institutional boundaries into partnerships can learn how public and private schools have attempted to do the same, and how they can operate as translators of a broader culture for their own schools.

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